



# Water Quality NewsFlash

Published by California Department of Transportation, Division of Environmental Analysis, Office of Storm Water Policy

November 14, 2005

Number 05-46

**Zinc – Piping can be a source** – Zinc is a common constituent of urban runoff and frequently exceeds water quality standards at the point of discharge. The main source is suspected to be wear and tear from tires, which contain about 1% zinc oxide, but pipes may also be a significant source. A recent Washington State DOT study found concentrations of zinc in bridge runoff at unusually high concentrations. The source was traced to galvanized (zinc-coated) downspouts—the longer the downspout, the more the zinc. In addition, the highest concentrations of zinc were produced by a downspout that appeared to have manufacturing defects in the galvanized coating (i.e., dross deposits). The study recommended that the Washington State DOT “review its standard specifications and inspection procedures to ensure that galvanized materials for highway projects are free from defects that might otherwise contribute to excessive concentrations of zinc in stormwater.” WSDOT Study:

<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/environment/stormwater/docs/520MonitoringRpt063005.pdf>

**Zinc – Tire manufacturer looks for alternatives** – As noted in the preceding item, zinc is pollutant of concern in stormwater runoff. The state’s 303(d) list identifies 37 waterways or segments as impaired by zinc. At least one tire manufacturer is investigating alternatives to zinc in the tire production process. Reducing pollutants at the source will assist Caltrans and municipal stormwater permittees in their efforts to reduce the amount of pollutants carried by stormwater runoff. <http://www.globaltirenews.com/headlines2.html?id=1128367162>

**Onsite Systems – Public comments available** – *Onsite wastewater treatment systems* (OWTS) include septic tank/leach fields and similar sewage treatment systems that do not discharge to waterways regulated under the Clean Water Act (i.e., they don’t require an NPDES permit). Typically, the discharge percolates into the ground. The Department operates a number of OWTS for sewage, for example at remote maintenance facilities and at roadside rest areas. The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) is in the middle of a lengthy process of developing statewide regulations for these facilities. The SWRCB has now posted the public and agency comments received during the recent “Scoping Meetings” held to solicit input on topics to be addressed in the EIR that will accompany the regulations. (The new regulations will not affect underground disposal facilities for stormwater unless sewage is also involved.)

<http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/ab885/>

**Invasive species – A new type of pollutant** - Invasive (non-native) species are an increasing factor in water quality. While invasive clams have caused problems for decades in some locations, invasive algae are a relatively new problem. Some of these algae may also contribute to the toxicity measured in waterways. Last week, the SWRCB sponsored a workshop on blue-green algae (*Microcystis aeruginosa*) in the Klamath River Basin. This past summer, the Klamath River and other waterways in the area experienced a “bloom” of blue-green algae that caused significant toxicity. Blue-green algae tend to float forming a surface scum. Elsewhere in the state blooms of blue-green algae have resulted in the deaths of dogs and cattle. More information: [http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/press/docs/2005/05\\_019.pdf](http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/press/docs/2005/05_019.pdf)

WQ NewsFlash is a weekly update of storm water and related news for the Department. *Verify information before taking action on these bulletins.* Contact Betty Sanchez, [Betty\\_Sanchez@dot.ca.gov](mailto:Betty_Sanchez@dot.ca.gov) (916) 653-2115, or Fred Krieger, (510) 843-7889, [fkrieger@msn.com](mailto:fkrieger@msn.com) with questions or to be added or deleted from e-mail list. Posted online at: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/env/stormwater/publicat/newsflash/index.htm>